

Message Text

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ACTION DOTE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2239

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 13534

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRN TGEN UR

SUBJECT: US-USSR TRANSPORTATION AGREEMENT: TRANSPORT OF THE FUTURE

REF: STATE 179037

1. IN RESPONSE TO EMBASSY'S ORAL ENQUIRY AND FOLLOW-UP LETTER DRAWING ON CONTENTS OF REFTEL, DEPUTY CHAIRMAN G.V. ALEKSENKO OF SCST SUMMONED SCI COUNSELOR TO DISCUSS SUBJECT PROJECT, INCLUDING US SUGGESTION THAT BOTH SIDES AGREE TO EXCHANGE BY SEPTEMBER 15 PAPERS ON STATE OF MAGLEV RESEARCH IN RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES. ALSO PARTICIPATING IN MEETING WERE N.I. SHINKAREV (HEAD OF TRANSPORTATION DEPT. OF SCST), V. S. VLADIMIROV (SECTION CHIEF, MINISTRY OF ELECTROTECHNICAL INDUSTRY), AND E.A. AYKAZYAN (COUNSELOR AND CHIEF OF SECTION, FOREIGN RELATIONS DEPARTMENT, SCST).

2. REFTEL DOES NOT INDICATE NATURE OR LEVEL OF APPROACH BY SOVIETS IN WASHINGTON THAT QUESTION OF WORKING GROUP ON TRANSPORT OF THE FUTURE BE DISCUSSED BY EMBASSY MOSCOW AND SOVIET ORGANIZATIONS, BUT ALEKSENKO DISCLAIMED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF SUCH APPROACH AND DENIED THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MADE IN FIRST PLACE, SINCE HIS OWN UNDERSTANDING WAS THAT SUCH MATTERS WOULD BE DISCUSSED AND THE WORKING GROUP WOULD BE ESTABLISHED ONLY AT THE FALL MEETING OF THE US-USSR JOINT COMMITTEE ON COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS INTERPRETATION
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OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE SIGNED AT SUMMIT ON

JULY 3, 1974, COPY OF WHICH HE HAD AT HAND AND PRODUCED FOR EXAMINATION. WE POINTED OUT THAT LANGUAGE OF COMMUNIQUE IN OUR OPINION CERTAINLY DID NOT RULE OUT INFORMATION EXCHANGE OR PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS IN ADVANCE OF THAT MEETING.

3. TO COMPOUND THE CONFUSION, ALEKSENKO THEN REVEALED THAT SOVIET EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON HAD REPORTED TO MOSCOW THAT US SIDE HAD MADE APPROACH SUGGESTING MEETING IN MOSCOW ON MAGNETICALLY LEVITATED TRAIN, TO BE HELD BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING, AND THAT EMBASSY MOSCOW WOULD SOON MAKE "NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS" WITH SOVIET SIDE. WE SAID THAT THERE OBVIOUSLY HAD BEEN SOME MISUNDERSTANDING, BUT IMPORTANT QUESTIONS AT THIS POINT WAS NOT WHICH SIDE HAD APPROACHED OTHER WITH WHAT SUGGESTION, BUT RATHER ELICITING ALEKSENKO'S GENERAL VIEWS ON QUESTION, AND SPECIFICALLY HIS REACTION TO US SUGGESTION ON INFORMATION EXCHANGE.

4. ALEKSENKO SAID THAT SUCH INFORMATION EXCHANGE WOULD NOT BE USEFUL APPROACH, SINCE PAPERS USUALLY RAISE MORE QUESTIONS THAN THEY ANSWER. SUCH QUESTIONS CAN ONLY BE ANSWERED IN FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS BETWEEN SPECIALISTS, HE ADDED. HE SAID THAT A MEETING OF EXPERTS WITH EXAMINATION OF EACH OTHER'S DATA AND LIVE DIALOGUE WOULD BE BEST WAY TO SET STAGE FOR FUTURE COOPERATION, AND PROPOSED THAT US AND SOVIET EXPERTS MEET FOR THIS PURPOSE IN FIRST HALF OF OCTOBER. THESE DISCUSSIONS SHOULD BE IN MOSCOW, HE NOTED, SINCE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING WILL BE HELD IN US. HE EMPHASIZED THAT HOLDING THESE DISCUSSIONS BEFORE JC MEETING IS DIRECT RESPONSE TO US PROPOSAL OF INFORMATION EXCHANGE BEFORE MEETING, AND THAT SOVIET SIDE WOULD EQUALLY ACCEPT HOLDING SUCH DISCUSSIONS AFTER THE JC MEETING AND AFTER FORMAL WORKING GROUP HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED.

5. ALEKSENKO SAID SOVIET SIDE PROPOSES THAT HEAD OF SPECIAL SUBGROUP ON TRANSPORTATION OF FUTURE SHOULD BE AT LEVEL OF DEPUTY MINISTER OF MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS. TWO OTHER KEY MEMBERS OF GROUP WOULD BE REPRESENTATIVE OF RAILROAD CAR AND LOCOMOTIVE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY. ALEKSENKO SAID LATTER TWO REPRESENTATIVES FROM US SIDE WOULD HOPEFULLY BE DRAWN FROM LARGE PRIVATE COMPANIES.

6. ALEKSENKO STRESSED THAT SOVIET SIDE IS VERY SERIOUS ABOUT CONFIDENTIAL

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COOPERATION IN THIS AREA AND ALSO EMPHASIZED THE LONG-TERM NATURE OF PROJECT. SHINKAREV ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT IT WOULD TAKE TEN OR MORE YEARS TO DEVELOP SUITABLE SYSTEM, AND SOVIETS WERE NOT SETTING SIGHTS ON ANY LONG-TRACK SYSTEM AT THIS POINT, BUT ON SHORTER DISTANCES, SUCH AS PROVIDING HIGH-SPEED TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN CITY CENTERS AND AIRPORTS OR SUBURBAN AREAS. ALEKSENKO CLAIMED THAT WEST GERMANY (AEG?) HAD ALREADY MADE SEVERAL APPROACHES TO SOVIETS FOR COOPERATION AND CONTACTS IN THIS

AREA, BUT USSR PREFERRED TO COOPERATE WITH U.S., AND WAS NOT AT THIS TIME ENCOURAGING FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH FRG. IF ANY FURTHER CONTACTS WITH FRG ARE MADE IN THIS FIELD, ALEKSENKO SAID US WOULD BE KEPT INFORMED. AS AN ASIDE, HE CLAIMED THAT USSR LEADS IN THEORETICAL WORK CONCERNING MAGLEV, AND THAT US, FRG, AND ITALY PERHAPS LEAD IN HARDWARE AND TECHNOLOGY.

7. EMBASSY NOTES THAT REFTEL REFERS TO DOT BEING AMENABLE "IN PRINCIPLE" TO "EVENTUAL" ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP ON TRANSPORT OF THE FUTURE, BUT CONSIDERS THIS "PREMATURE" PENDING CLARIFICATION THROUGH INFORMATION EXCHANGE ON STATE OF RESEARCH IN EACH COUNTRY. THIS APPEARS TO CONFLICT WITH LANGUAGE OF JOINT COMMUNIQUE, IN WHICH BOTH SIDES AGREED THAT SUCH WORKING GROUP WOULD BE ESTABLISHED AT FALL JC MEETING TO DEVELOP A JOINT RESEARCH COOPERATION PROGRAM IN THIS AREA. WOULD APPRECIATE GUIDANCE.

8. PLEASE ADVISE WHETHER DOT ACCEPTS SOVIET PROPOSAL TO HOLD DISCUSSIONS AT EXPERT LEVEL IN MOSCOW DURING FIRST HALF OF OCTOBER.
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